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## DOCUMENTS

### I.

#### AN EARLY PASTORAL LETTER (1827)

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The following is an authentic copy of the first Pastoral Letter ever printed west of the Alleghenies. It was issued as a Lenten Pastoral in 1827 by the Right Rev. Edward Fenwick, O.P., the first Bishop of Cincinnati (1822-1832). Without doubt this entire document has never been printed before in any life of Bishop Fenwick or in any periodical. The original document is at present preserved in the *Archives of the Dominican House of Studies*, Washington, D. C. It is 12½ inches long and 8 inches wide. The Pastoral consists of four pages or two folios; it is printed in ordinary type on page one and on the first half of page two. Then follow the Lenten Regulations, which Bishop Fenwick changed himself in the manner shown in the copy here published. On page three of the Pastoral is the letter to Mr. Michael Dittoe, written in the Bishop's own handwriting. There was no priest at Uniontown at the time the Pastoral was issued, and Mr. Dittoe was probably catechist to the Catholic children there and a man of standing in the community. He was a member of the Dittoe family which gave the land on which St. Joseph's Church, Somerset, Ohio, now stands. This is the oldest church in Ohio, having been dedicated December 6, 1818. The original Lenten Pastoral of Bishop Fenwick, of which the following is an authentic copy, was presented, as we read on page four of the document itself, to St. Joseph's, May 4, 1892, by Rev. Robert J. J. Harkins, who was one of the oldest Catholics of Zanesville. A very valuable sketch by Father Harkins, entitled *The Three First Catholic Churches in Zanesville, Ohio*, was published by Rev. V. F. O'Daniel, O.P., in the *A. C. H. S. Records* (Phila.), Vol. XXV, No. 3 (Sept., 1914), pp. 193-216.

#### PASTORAL LETTER.

*"Behold! now is the acceptable time; behold! now is the day of salvation."*

*Reverend Brethren and Beloved Children in Christ Jesus:*

Again have the revolving seasons brought us near the Apostolic fast of Lent; a season most disgusting to pampered worldings, but highly acceptable to good and faithful Christians, who are careful to mortify the flesh, with its vices and concupiscences, and to Jesus, the "Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii, 2), who is now ready to pour down upon such Christians the graces He merited for them when He endured the Cross, despising the shame thereof; who, as St. Matthew (iv, 1, 2) informs us, "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and when He had fasted forty days and forty nights He was hungry." In this passage of the holy Evangelist we have the example not of a Moses or an Elias, but of Him "to whom the law and all the prophets gave testimony," the Great Messiah, our divine Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, observing a rigorous fast, amidst the other privations and horrors of a wilderness. This example must silence the

cavils of irreligion; this must stifle the complaints and confound the subterfuges of sensuality, which ever tries to elude the mortifications of this penitential season. We here see that the fast of Lent (a fast which has been observed by the true faithful in all countries and in all ages since the time of Christ) was instituted by the Apostles, in imitation of the forty days' fast which He himself was pleased to keep previously to his entering upon the work of His divine mission. Fasting, dear Christians, is the most excellent and comprehensive of the works of exterior mortification. It tends to extinguish the most dangerous of the human passions, to elevate the mind to the contemplation of holy things, to produce in us habits of patience, fortitude and self-denial; and, being accompanied with the other requisites on our part, and sanctified by the merits of Christ's all-atoning fast and precious blood, to satisfy the divine justice provoked by our sins.

But it is impossible, my dear brethren, to repeat too often, or to impress too strongly on your minds, those other requisites here alluded to for rendering your fast pleasing to God and beneficial to your souls. They are declared by God himself, in the voice of His Prophet: "Be converted to me with your whole hearts, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments." The condition of an acceptable fast mostly here insisted on, as you see, is a sincere and sovereign contrition of heart for the sins by which we have offended our gracious God. We are called upon to weep and mourn, and to rend our very hearts asunder in the consideration of the offenses we have been guilty of. To obtain this happy disposition (the choicest of God's gifts to us unhappy sinners) you must make use of the ordinary means which He has appointed for this purpose: you must *pass over, in the bitterness of your soul, all your years*, days and hours, fruitlessly spent in the gratification of your passions, instead of the service of your Creator and Master; that is to say, you must frequently, seriously, impartially and contritely examine your consciences during this penitential season. *In whatever you do, you must remember your last end*; that is to say, you must, in heartfelt meditation, or in an intense application to spiritual books or exhortations, impress on your minds that great end for which your Creator sent you into the world, and how you hitherto answered it; likewise of the approaching end of your present state of existence by death, and of all connection and relation, on your part, with this sublunary world, and with whatever belongs to it, of the awful circumstances, which are then to take place in your regard,—namely, a dreadful trial you are then each of you to undergo, on the whole tenor of your respective lives, before an all-seeing and infinitely just and an omnipotent Judge; and of the all-important sentence which He will then pronounce upon each of you, either of incomprehensible eternal happiness, or of infinite, never-ending tortures,—saying to some of you, as He then will say—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you!" and to others—"Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" In a word, beloved brethren, you are exhorted and called upon at this holy time, by God and His Church, in the words of the Prophet, to be *converted to the Lord with all your hearts*; that is to say, to renounce *the world, the flesh and the devil*,—namely, sin, and all the occasions of sin, in order who in time has delivered himself up a bleeding victim for you, dying a cruel to give yourselves henceforward to Him who created you from all eternity, and and ignominious death to save you from sin and hell! I have reminded you, my beloved children, as my duty to your precious souls obliges me to remind you, that if you are resolved to be sincerely and effectually converted to God, you must not only renounce sin itself, but also the occasions of it. It is an illusion and a

folly to pretend to renounce one without quitting the other. See, then, in the course of that profound self-examination which is here recommended to you, what have the occasions of your past transgressions, and take care to cut them off, though they be as dear to you as a hand or an eye. Without entering further into the subject at present, I can pronounce in general that the world,—that world which the Scripture tells us is *founded in iniquity*, that world against which Christ thunders out his bitterest woes,—the world, I say, is the most dangerous of all your spiritual enemies, and is the more general occasion of your sins. Avoid, then, if possible, the conversation and company of professed wordlings, and in the necessary communication you are obliged to hold with the world, arm yourselves with the maxims of the Gospel against its seducing language and arts. Fly, in particular, its corrupt and infectious amusements, its dances, novels and theaters. These amusements inflame the passions, beguile the mind, and counteract the whole tenor of the morality preached by Jesus Christ. Among the other evils and scandals of the wicked age in which we live, it is none of the least that your neighbor's character should be so often made the subject of your discourses, in destroying it by the enormous crimes of detraction and slander. This sin, in particular, I cannot too frequently caution you to avoid, since it is opposed to the amiable virtue of Christian *charity*.

In addition to motives already mentioned for endeavoring to appease the wrath of God by works of penance, through the precious merits of Jesus Christ, I ought to remind you, dear Christians, of the rapid increase of the infidelity and impiety of these times in which we live. This is an evil which God inflicts upon us on account of our sins. O let us, then, endeavor to disarm the *dreadful hand of the living God*, thus displayed, by bringing forth worthy fruits of penance—if perhaps his wrath may be turned from us, as it was from Nineveh, by the conversion of unbelievers. Two circumstances seem to afford us a steady comfort. The first is that we are possessed of the true religion of Jesus Christ, with all its inestimable resources to console and strengthen us under whatever temporal calamities may befall us. O let us hold this religion fast, as our ancestors have done, to the loss frequently of all temporal comfort, and not unfrequently of their lives. The second existing comfort is that the venerable Head of the Church, Leo XII, looking around on all the members of his dear family, the Catholic Church, and embracing within his paternal solicitude his remotest children, with the same affection as those who immediately surround his throne, extends particularly to us, as his weakest children, the benign influence of his Apostolical care.

Many of the reflections here suggested might seem to urge the necessity of our observing the present Lent with all its original and native rigor; nevertheless, from the consideration of your peculiar circumstances, I have thought it right to grant the following dispensations for the present Lent:

#### REGULATIONS.

1. Every day, except Sunday, is to be kept as fast, upon one meal, to be taken about noon, or any time after noon.
2. The use of flesh meat is allowed on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, at the one meal only; and on Sundays as usual.
3. Besides the meal on fasting days, a collation, which should not exceed the fourth part of an ordinary meal, is allowed; this might be taken in the morning

or at night, but not at each time. At this collation neither meat, fish *nor* eggs is allowed. *Butter or cheese allowed.*

Travelers who cannot without difficulty or great inconvenience procure necessary food are dispensed with from the observance of the law during those journeys which are of necessity and in those places where they cannot make arrangements for observing the law.

Laboring persons whose bodily labor is very great and women upon whose sustenance depends that of their children, are also excepted from the observance of the law of fasting, though not of abstinence.

The pastors are authorized in their different congregations to give such dispensations as they may, before God, see proper to those persons who are subject to their jurisdiction.

The use of flesh meat is not allowed for the Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday next preceding Easter Sunday.

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with you. Amen!

† EDWARD, *Bishop of Cincinnati.*

Mr. Michl Dittoe:

Will read or show the annexed Pastoral to his Catholic neighbors & recommend the observance of its contents.

We are admonished by our Saviour in the Gospel "to work out our salvation with fear & trembling," "to do penance or perish for ever," "to judge & condemn ourselves now that we [may] not be condemned with the world." Therefore "let your light shine before men that they may see your good works & glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Accept my blessing for yourself, yr. family & yr. neighbors.

† Edwd.  
B. C.

[Address] Mr. Michael Dittoe,  
Union Town,  
near Somerset, P. C., O.

## II.

### AN EARLY PAGE IN THE CATHOLIC HISTORY OF NEW YORK

If the most interesting phase of American history be, as many writers assure us, the international relations of the United States with Europe after the War of Independence, then to Catholic hearts in America the next in order of interest is the share taken by European Catholics in the support of the first American missions. It is almost an untouched field in our history; and gratitude would seem to suggest that, in the light of the charities the American people, Catholic and non-Catholic, have been pouring lately into the afflicted countries of Europe, a more accurate attempt should be made to chronicle all that corporate bodies, such as the *Leopoldine Association of Vienna*, the *Ludwigsverein of Munich*, and the *Propagation of the Faith of Lyons*, accomplished in days when the Church was hampered and handicapped here by an overwhelming poverty. Besides these official societies